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**February 22, 2002**

**Contact: Kim Hunter Reed**

**LEGISLATIVE PANEL APPROVES MODEST TUITION INCREASE**

The Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget today (Feb 22) unanimously approved the implementation of new legislation allowing some colleges and universities to increase tuition up to a maximum of 3%.

"This approval allows a more reasonable approach to setting tuition. No one wants to pursue large tuition increases because of the hardship that it can create for our students and their parents. This incremental cost-of-living approach which the legislature has seen fit to support is a much better way to deal with this issue," said E. Joseph Savoie, Commissioner of Higher Education.

The approved per semester increase averages about \$35 per campus. Savoie pointed out that this increase is significantly below peer regional tuition averages. For example, Mississippi has authorized a 15% increase in tuition this year. Florida has increased tuition by 7.5% with increases in Texas of 5% and Tennessee of 15%.

"We want to maintain our competitive edge so that we can continue to provide quality services to our students and the communities they serve. In order to do this, we must have resources in place. With low tuition rates compared to the Southern Regional average and low state funding, this is a continuous challenge. Today's increase will not allow us to make headway. We're just trying to keep up," Savoie said.

The original tuition legislation received the support of the state's student government leaders as a reasonable approach to address budgetary needs.

The approval of the Joint Legislative Committee comes after the LSU, Southern and University of Louisiana System boards approved the measure for their respective campuses.

According to the legislation approved last year, any increases in tuition are capped at 3%. The legislation sunsets in 2005.